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Participatory Design in a compressed timeframe, through an unConference format.

Perspectives on Participation @ DIS 2012

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Overview:

The Fuel from Waste unConference – Nairobi May 2011 *‘Sustainable fuel; sustainable jobs; better communities’*

“So, we decided to set-up an unConference to produce that inclusive, active, generative, informal atmosphere, in which we could all co-create practical ideas: A ‘doing’ shop, not a ‘talking’ shop (although plenty of talking, to enable the ‘doing’)... We want this to be an unConference where everyone goes home with ideas, inspiration, resources and plans to make stuff happen. We’ll publish, share and make it so! To help this happen, we want you to tell us your ‘stories’. You all have a story to tell, and if you share it at ‘Fuel from Waste’, we can weave it into the creative co-design; can let it inspire visitors; can share those stories with the wider world and, hopefully, they will resonate and expand.”

Fuel from Waste Introduction on <http://fuelfromwaste.wordpress.com> - Wyn Griffiths

The activity:

Establish (Equality and legitimacy) and Elicit (Story tell – empower)

- Demonstrations, exhibition of product and technology and hands-on activities
- Individual vox-pops – video interviews with participants. Their personal details, their briquetting stories.
- Attendee map – individual post-its containing ‘name, industry, position’



Elicit (Story tell – empower) and Employ (Story weave – engage and apply)

- Generative co-creation through creative conversations in small groups – Question: ‘Wouldn’t it be great if...? X10’ – 1 idea per A4 sheet, as many ideas per group as possible.



Employ (Story weave – engage and apply) and Embed (Confirm ownership)

- Review, analysis and sharing of generative work, with unpacking of future activity, to agree the ‘roadmap’ for the future.



Why were you motivated to involve people in a participative manner in this project, and why were people motivated to participate?

The unConference was the culmination of a collaborative research project between Nairobi-based informal industry, an NGO and academia, funded by the British Council. The project was inherently ‘participatory’ (comprising of partnerships between students and artisans, overseen by academics and NGO workers), but this was done over 18 months, with single subject partnerships during the body of the project. To close off the project and generate an appropriate plan for the next stages of work, it was agreed that a ‘forum’ with a generative brief and maximum, inclusive access would be the best way to proceed. The motivation of attendees came from the critical nature of the issues being explored - employment, local environment, personal/community health and deforestation/broader environmental concerns.

What were the key transformative moments within this project?

The four headline descriptions in the 4 'E's model highlight the key moments when uncertainty was transformed into belief and engagement. The activities were designed to create reassurance that all participants were truly and equally valued, give confidence to honestly create and share, and provide assurance that the plan was based on a consensus that would be supported during ongoing activity.

The model:

Condensed, accessible, equitable and ethical participatory design through 4 'E's:

The 4 'E's Stages: Establish; Elicit; Employ; Embed

Transparency is the guiding principle of the model.

Establish - Equality and legitimacy

- Recognise the individual
- Record their personal details, opinions
- Legitimise their equality of input

Elicit - Story tell - empower

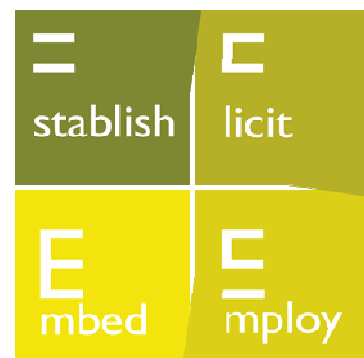
- Communicate key, open questions to be addressed
- Facilitate conversations and record
- Share outcomes

Employ - Story weave – engage and apply

- Analyse and/or categorise responses in the open forum
- Associate individuals' responses with the categories (organize)
- Synthesize into a design/overview/map/plan/etc. as appropriate
- Review and refine in the open forum

Embed - Confirm ownership

- Agree consensus on 'story' synthesis
- Agree formal use/publication intent
- Inform of communications channels details
- Recognition of contribution



How did you measure the success of the project's "outcomes", if at all?

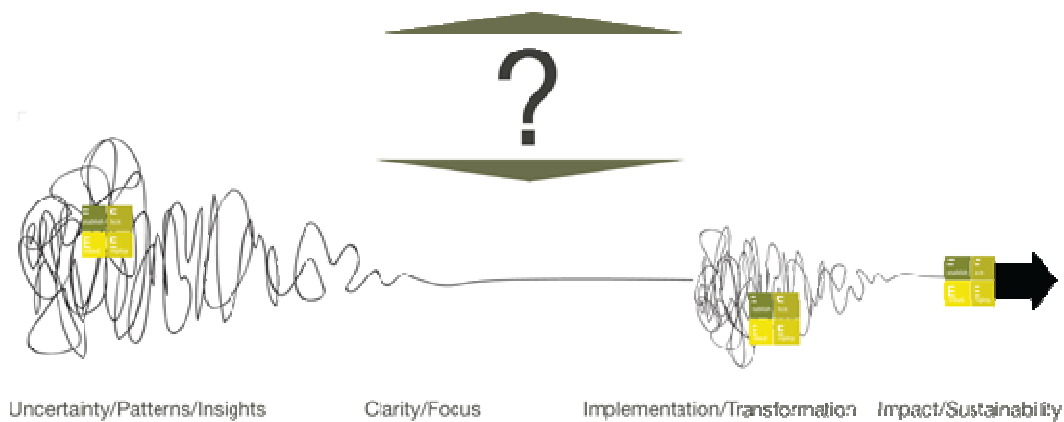
Success has been measured through a variety of qualitative effects:

- Continued engagement and activity within the co-designed FfW Network.
- Successful initiatives supported by the network, deriving from the unConference.
- Media penetration and expansion of network membership and business activity.

- Securing of funding based on the unConference plan (Pending).

Wyn's questions:

1. Is the single day model valid?
2. Is the single-day model transferable to 'deeper' design engagements?
3. Are the interventions more suited/effective at particular stages of the 'squiggle' process? Is it better to focus on generative stage, rather than the implementation stage?



4. How do you design the outcome format to best represent the activities needed and the requirements of the reporting context? Who's doing the activity? Who's using the outcomes?
5. The model has been designed to be inherently ethical and equitable, but in this condensed format, does it conform to the standards required in deeper engagements?